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ABSTRACT

Reactions of male and female adolescent pairs to a same sex newcomer were observed as a means of assessing sex differences in indirect aggressive behaviors. Following a problem solving session, the group members rated each other's personality. Adolescent girls made less favorable judgments of the newcomer than did adolescent boys. In addition, on behavior interaction measures obtained during the problem solving task, girls displayed less friendly reactions than did boys toward the newcomer. These results, in conjunction with those of an earlier study, reflect developmental consistencies in sex differences in the use of indirect aggressive behaviors. (Author)

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Sex Differences in Adolescent Reactions Toward Newcomers[1]

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The aim of this study is to investigate sex differences in indirect expressions of aggression among adolescent girls and boys. The literature for sex differences in children's aggression indicates that while boys are generally more aggressive than girls, under some circumstances, girls may manifest more aggression than boys (Maccoby, 1966). The direction of sex differences in aggression appears to be closely related to the mode of aggressive response. Greater aggression among girls than boys seems to be associated with verbal aggression (Jersild & Markey, 1935; Muste & Sharpe, 1947), with pro-social aggression (Sears, 1961) and, more broadly, with indirect expressions of aggression (Feshbach, 1969).

Sex differences in adult aggression have also been shown to vary with the measure of aggression employed (Bennett & Cohen, 1959; Kagan & Moss, 1961; Sarason, 1965). It is evident from studies with older children and adults that girls have more anxiety over aggression than boys (Berkowitz, 1964; Buss & Brock, 1963; Consentino, 1964; Rothaus & Worchel, 1964; Sears, 1961; Wyer, Weatherley, & Terrell, 1965). Thus, it seems reasonable to assume that the direction of a sex difference yielded by a particular aggressive response measure depends not only upon differences in aggressive motivation but also upon the degree to which that response elicits anxiety, and upon the sex typing of the response.

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The great range of behaviors that are subsumed under the rubric of aggression further complicates the derivation of generalizations concerning sex differences in aggression. It is an empirical question as to whether such diverse behaviors as a physical attack, a critical remark, a humiliating action, and an unfriendly gesture are all functionally similar. If aggression is conceptualized, as in psychoanalytic theory and as in the frustration-aggression model of Dollard et al. (Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer & Sears, 1939), as a motivated sequence of behavior, the goal of which is to inflict pain, then there are clearly many methods, indirect and direct, by which this goal can be achieved. The tendency of girls to manifest more anxiety over aggression than boys and the masculine sex typing of physical aggression should probably result in girls manifesting more indirect aggressive responses, relative to the difference in these response modes displayed by boys.

In a previous study of sex differences in modes of aggression, Feshbach (1969) observed the reactions of pairs of six and seven year old boys and girls to the introduction of a same and opposite sex newcomer. While no significant differences between the sexes were observed in the expression of direct aggression, the girls obtained significantly higher indirect aggression scores. Indirect aggression toward the newcomer, as measured in the Feshbach (1969) study, was defined by rejection and exclusion of the newcomer, while physically aggressive responses, verbal threats, and hostile expressions constituted the direct aggression category. The present study is focused on indirect aggressive responses, with the object of investigating developmental consistencies in the differential reactions of the two sexes to a newcomer. In addition to employing an older age group, the present study differs from the previous investigation in the context in which the stranger is introduced and in the measures used to assess indirect aggression. Nevertheless, it is anticipated that adolescent female groups will display less friendly behaviors toward a newcomer

than adolescent male groups.

While the principal impetus for this investigation stems from an interest in sex differences in modes of aggression, the data to be obtained also bear upon problems of ethnocentricity. Thus, the manner in which male and female groups react to outsiders may provide some insights into processes mediating prejudice and social distance, and into the particular significance which sex-typed attributes may have in influencing these reactions.

METHOD

Subjects

The subjects (Ss) in the study were seventh and eighth grade students, attending a predominantly middle class white junior high school in the Los Angeles area.[2] The sample consisted of 87 adolescents, 42 boys and 45 girls. The Ss were divided into like sexed triads, resulting in 15 girl triads and 14 boy triads.

The first two members of the group (original group members) were selected from eighth grade classrooms. They had been judged by their teachers to be "close friends." This judgment was made by the teachers and was subsequently verified by the children's own reports. The third member, a newcomer of the same sex, was selected from the seventh grade. The students at both age levels were average in ability, white, and from middle class backgrounds.

Procedure

During each experimental session, the S's who had previously been categorized into friendship pairs were brought to the experimental room. They were informed that the project they were participating in was designed to provide better understanding of the methods adolescents use to solve

social problems. They were then advised that they were going to solve social problems together and while there were no correct or incorrect solutions, they were ultimately to arrive at a group decision for each problem. Agreement on "one" solution by the group was emphasized.

After the experimenter (E) read the problem to the original group member pairs, time was allotted for the Ss to answer the problem spontaneously. After a lapse of approximately two minutes, if no discussion was initiated, E raised facilitating questions such as "How do you think this person felt about the situation?", "What kinds of solutions can you see to this problem?", "What do you think you would do under these circumstances?". This procedure was followed for each problem presented to the original group members.

Following the presentation of the three problems, E informed the original pair that she was also interested in observing the process by which an enlarged group of three members would arrive at a common conclusion. A third member, the newcomer, was then brought into the room and introduced to the original group. Two problems similar in nature to the first three, were then given to the triad to solve. Thus, the original group members participated in the discussion of five problems while the newcomers participated in the solution of two problems. The total problem solving time for each experimental session, including both the two person and three person problem discussions, was approximately 25 minutes.

When the problem solving phase of the experimental session was completed, rating scales were distributed to the triads. Each S was then asked to evaluate and rate each of the other two group members. It was stressed that the ratings were to be based solely on impressions derived during the group discussion. Each S independently and privately completed a 28 item rating scale for each of the other two members of the triad.

Discussion Problems

The social problems used for this experiment were designed for the study with the aim of constructing realistic dilemmas with which adolescent boys and girls could readily identify. The problems were first pretested on a smaller sample of adolescents and those that evoked little or no discussion were discarded. Comparable problems were employed for boys and girls with minor changes in names and the activities involved. Two problems, illustrating those included in the study, are presented below.

Problem #3. Kim, a friend of Laura's, calls up Laura to invite her to a birthday party. Since Laura isn't home, her mother accepts the birthday invitation for her. When Laura arrives home and learns about this, she is quite upset with her mother, since she and Kim just had a fight the other day and are not talking. Her mother thinks she should go.

Problem #5. On Monday the science teacher gave an assignment to the class which should be due on Friday. Thursday evening Daniel realizes he will not be able to finish it in time to bring it to school. Daniel goes to his dad and asks him to help him because he'll never finish in time if he doesn't.

Measures

Rating Scale. The rating scale consisted of 28 items assessing impressions of intelligence, appearance, social desirability, social acceptance, and leadership. The possible answers ranged from "I agree very much with this statement" to "I disagree very much with this statement," the directionality of the items being balanced for favorability. Each item was weighted from one through four, with one being given to the most negative evaluation and four to the most positive. Possible total scores could then range from 28-112. Evidence of internal consistency is provided by the split-half reliability of .97, based

on a sample of 58 adolescents.

Behavioral-Interaction Measure: A tape recorder was used throughout the sessions to obtain the behavioral-interaction data. The Ss were assured that only the investigator would have access to the tapes. They readily accepted this explanation and it did not appear that the presence of the tape recorder affected the spontaneous behavior in the experimental situation.

Three behavioral measures were obtained from the tape recordings for each of the 15 girl and 14 boy triads. These were:

1. Latency. Lapsed time before either of the two initial group members addressed the newcomer, and lapsed time before the newcomer spoke was determined.
2. Verbal rejection. This measure consisted of the frequency of verbal rejections of the newcomer's ideas by either original group member. In order for a rejection to be scored, a direct negation, criticism, or contradiction had to be made, e.g., statements such as "That's no good", "You're wrong", "We'll stick to my idea".
3. Verbal incorporation. This measure consisted of the frequency of incorporation of the newcomer's ideas into the final decision of the group. A dichotomous "incorporation-failure to incorporate" judgment was made.

A sample of 16 triads, eight girl and eight boy, was used to determine the reliability of the rater's judgments. Two raters, who scored the protocols independently, agreed on 92% of the "verbal rejection" judgments. They disagreed on only one of the 32 "incorporated into final decision" judgments.

RESULTS

Rating Scale

The original group members' impressions of each other and of the newcomer are reflected in the overall ratings presented in Table 1. As

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Insert Table 1 about here

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might be anticipated, the original group members, who had been selected on the basis of mutual friendship, rated each other very highly. There were no sex differences in these ratings, the mean of 98.5 for the boys being very similar to the mean of 97.5 for the girls. Both of these means are significantly higher (t test, $p<.001$) than the corresponding ratings of the newcomer by the original group members. The higher ratings by the original group members of each other than of the newcomer provide some empirical validation of the initial selection procedures in which teacher judgments were used as the means for determining which children were close friends. However, the newcomer's ratings of the original group member, although not significantly different from the latter's ratings of the newcomer, were close to the original group members' ratings of each other. This finding suggests that a contrast effect may also have influenced the differential judgments of the original group members.

Of central interest is the analysis of sex differences in the ratings of the newcomer by the original group members. Consistent with the primary experimental hypothesis, the mean ratings of the girls reflected a less favorable reaction to the newcomer than the mean rating of the boys. A t-test (one-tailed) for the difference between the mean of 94.1 for the males and 88.4 for the females yields a p value at the

.05 level. This difference is in accord with expectation.

Behavioral-Interaction Measures: There were three measures taken of the interaction between the original group members and the newcomer, each designed to assess an indirect mode of expression of a negative attitude toward the newcomer. The first of these measures, Latency, consisted of the time elapsing before one of the original group members addressed the newcomer. The girls took much longer than the boys before speaking to the newcomer. The median time for the girls was 73 seconds in comparison to only 22 seconds for the boys, the obtained Mann Whitney U of 44.5 being significant at the .01 level (one-tailed). The frequency distributions for the Latency Scores are presented in Table 2. It is of interest that in four of the girl-groups, in contrast to one of the boy-groups, not a

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Insert Table 2 about here

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word was addressed to the newcomer, despite the fact that in all instances the newcomer spoke at some point to an original group member. From Table 2, it can be seen that, in general, the newcomers directed their remarks toward the original group members earlier than the original group members did to the newcomer. However, girl newcomers waited longer before speaking than did the newcomer boys, the median time for the girls being 23 seconds and for the boys, 11 seconds ($U=44.5$; $p < .02$).

In order to determine whether the initial difference in response to the newcomer persisted during the experimental session, a separate analysis was made of the Latency Scores after the instructions for the second problem were administered. The distributions are comparable to those presented in Table 2. The girls again took much longer than the boys before addressing

the newcomer, the median time for the girls being 72 seconds while the median time for the boys was 20 seconds. The obtained Mann Whitney U of 39 was significant at the .01 level (one-tailed). The newcomer girls also took longer than the boys before addressing the older group member on the second problem, the median time for the girls being 30 seconds in comparison to 15 seconds for the boys.

The reactions to the newcomer's suggestions provided two additional interaction measures for determining the attitude of the adolescent groups to the newcomer. The first of these consisted of the frequency with which the original group members verbally rejected the newcomer's ideas. As Table 3A indicates, the number of direct verbal rejections tended to be quite

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Insert Table 3 about here

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low for both male and female groups, six of the 15 female groups and two of the 14 male groups explicitly rejecting one or more suggestions of the newcomer. This difference, while consistent with the previous findings, does not attain significance. The second measure consisted of the frequency with which the newcomer's ideas were incorporated intothe final decision of the group. From Table 3 it can be seen that the girls were much more inclined than the boys to ignore the newcomer's ideas. Of the 15 female groups, only 4 included the newcomer's suggestions in at least one of their final decisions in comparison to 10 of the 14 male groups. This difference in distribution yields a Chi Square of 4.2, significant at the .025 level (one-tailed).

DISCUSSION

The experimental results are consistent with the expectation that female friendship pairs will display more negative, rejecting attitudes toward a same-sex stranger than will pairs of male friends. Girls judged the newcomer less favorably than did boys, were less welcoming, and were more likely than boys to ignore the newcomer's suggestions in arriving at a group decision. While the results have clearly established sex differences in the response to a newcomer, the interpretation of these data requires further clarification. The issue is whether these sex differences are a reflection of differences in hostility. The experimental operations employed in this study were explicitly designed to tap subtle, indirect manifestations of hostility and therefore are somewhat removed from more patent aggressive behaviors. Nevertheless, insofar as aggression is conceived of as a motivated sequence of behaviors resulting in the infliction of pain, then a deliberate snub and social exclusion maybe functionally equivalent to a verbal insult or even to a physical blow.

At the same time, the socially rejecting responses observed in this study could be mediated by variables other than hostility. For example, it might be argued that girls are more fearful of strangers and the obtained sex differences are more indicative of differences in shyness than in aggression. Although a "shyness" or "social anxiety" interpretation would account for the delay in verbally addressing the newcomer, it would not account for the failure to incorporate the newcomer's suggestions in the group decision and for the less positive attitude toward the newcomer which the girls revealed on the questionnaire. However, if one assumes that the stress of social anxiety produced the observed negative social behavior, then this interpretation becomes quite similar to an explanation

which views the reactions to the newcomer as a manifestation of aggression.

Differences in social cohesiveness between male and female groups can also be offered as a possible explanation of the findings. Perhaps the difference in behavior toward the newcomer was a reflection of greater attachment by female members to their initial sub-groups. However, it should be noted that the mutual ratings of the original group members for the girl-groups were very similar to those of the boy-groups. This finding, while not conclusive, does not support the notion that the boy and girl groups differed in cohesiveness. In order to clarify the possible role of cohesiveness, it would be informative to manipulate the degree of cohesiveness of male and female groups and to determine whether both sexes respond similarly or differentially to a newcomer under these varying conditions.

Another factor which may be contributing to the observed sex differences is the greater task orientation that has been noted in adolescent boys in contrast to the greater social orientation of adolescent girls (Douvant & Adelson, 1966). While this factor is compatible with the data bearing upon the incorporation of the newcomer's suggestions, it is less relevant to the latency and attitude findings. Nevertheless, it would be of interest to manipulate task and social orientation in subsequent studies. In addition, for primarily methodological reasons, it would be desirable to vary the sex of the experimenter. The fact that only a female experimenter was employed in the present study may have influenced some aspect of the data although it is difficult to see how it could have affected the major findings.

Although the factors mediating the experimental findings require further delineation, the data indicate that female groups are less friendly to a newcomer than male groups. This finding is consistent with those of a prior study of sex differences in response to a newcomer where a much younger age group was employed and where a free play as compared to a

social problem solving situation was used to assess reactions to the newcomer. This continuity over a wide age span suggests a stable sex difference in response to outsiders which has its roots in the early developmental history of the child. This possibility is sufficiently intriguing to justify the search for other manifestations of this trait and the investigation of its antecedents and correlates.

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FOOTNOTES

1. This article is based on the master's thesis of the junior author conducted under the direction of the senior author, at the University of California, Los Angeles.
2. Appreciation is expressed to the participating schools and the League of Cooperating Schools.

TABLE 1

Sex Differences in the Personality Impression Ratings by the Original Group Member and the Newcomer

	Boys		Girls		
	M	S.D.	M	S.D.	t[a]
Ratings by Original Group Member of Other Original Group Member	98.4	8.7	97.5	10.4	.35
Ratings by Original Group Members of Newcomer	94.1	10.8	88.4	14.8	1.70*
Ratings by Newcomer of Original Group Member	97.3	7.9	96.5	10.6	.20

[a]One-tailed test

*$p < .05$

TABLE 2

Sex Differences in Latency

Time Elapsing Before Either Group Member Addressed Newcomer			Time Elapsing Before Newcomer Spoke to an Original Group Member	
Time in sec.	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
0-4			3	1
5-9	1	1	2	2
10-14	3		6	1
15-19			2	2
20-24	6	1		2
25-29	2		1	
30-34				3
35-39	1	1		2
40-44		2		1
45-49				
50-54		1		
55-59				1
60-64				
65-69				
70-74		2		
75-79				
80-84		1		
85-89				
90-94		1		
95-99				
100-104				
105-109				
110-114				
115-119		1		
Never Spoke	1	4		

TABLE 3

Reactions to Newcomer's Suggestions

A. Frequency of Verbal Rejections of Newcomer's Suggestions

	0	1 & 2
Male Triads	12	2
Female Triads	9	6

$x^2 = 1.4$*

$P > .10$

B. Frequency of Verbal Incorporation of Suggestions into Group Decision

	0	1 & 2
Male Triads	4	10
Female Triads	11	4

$x^2 = 4.2$*

$P < .05$

*Calculation of x^2 based on Yates Correction.